

Cultural Heritage of Mithilā

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I

Mithilā, the land of hoary antiquity, is one of the earliest centres of civilisation in the east, particularly in the field of Vedic culture. Even prior to its Aryanisation, it had its own history about which we have hardly any plausible source of information. But a critical anthropological and ethnological review of the geographical limits of this ancient land reveals to us a picture worthy of examination. The recent excavations at Chirand have proved, beyond any shadow of doubt, that north Bihar had achieved great cultural heights in the pre-historic period and it had a place of pride among the various cultural centres in the neolithic phase. Even before the emergence of the Aryans on the scene, Mithilā had wide contacts and it seems that the Kirātas and a number of other tribes had extended their sway over the northern part of Vidisha.

Rome was not built in a day so goes the adage and in that very sense we can say that the Mithilā of Janaka was not a sudden phenomenon in the history of eastern India rather it took centuries to build a pattern of culture out of which emerged the facets of cultural life in a varied colour. The Janaka period of Vidisha's history presupposes a long cultural continuity and tradition and in the absence of any archaeological evidence we can simply surmise or conjecture that Vidisha had developed as an important centre of trade and cultural link since time immemorial. The geographical setting had given it a peculiar place and naturally the development of a varied culture in this area had a lasting impact on Indian culture as a whole.

The intermingling of different races and culture gave rise to a certain composite type with more or less common characteristics. The northern and north-eastern part of India had some earliest contacts with the Austro-

Dravidian elements. According to S.K. Chatterji, "the earliest types of cultural assimilation went hand in hand with a large amount of racial fusion... and some of the fundamental things in Brahmanical Hinduism like the worship of Śiva and Ureā, of Viṣṇu and Śrī and the yoga philosophy and practice came from the Dravidian speakers."¹ Parts of north Bihar had been associated with the Kīrāta culture, that is, the non-āryan culture. In our estimate of the cultural heritage of Mithilā, we have to take into account the earlier references to the Kīrātas, believed to have been the non-āryan tribes prevailing over the destiny of the Tarai region of Videha prior to its aryānisation. The Kīrātas are mentioned in the Vedic literature, *Mahābhārata* (standing at the confluence of the cultural synthesis through the ages) and other contemporary literature. A Kīrāta is mentioned in connection with the *Parjanyādā* sacrifice² and in the *Aśvamedha*,³ a kīrāta is associated with the mountain. Manu⁴ regards the Kīrāta as a degraded Kṣatriya. Mahādeva is associated with the Kīrātas in the *Mahābhārata* and Bhīma meets the Kīrātas in the east of Videha. He is credited with having defeated seven of the Kīrāta rulers. There is already a *Kīrātaparva* section in the *Tampana* of the *Adhikābhārata*, where the Kīrātas are described as of yellow colour and even lord Śiva is said to have once taken the form of a Kīrāta.

The Kīrātas are associated with the foreign peoples like the Yavanas, the Śakas, the Pahlavas and the Chīnēse in the *Mahābhārata* and also by Sylvain Levy. Their golden colour is also attested to in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and Kīrātas are placed in the east. Here we are not in a position to assess critically the origin and development of the Kīrāta culture in India in the present state of our knowledge but the picture that emerges from our study of the ancient texts suggests that they contributed a good deal to the development

1 S. K. Chatterji—*Kīrātaśāstrā* (Calcutta, 1930), p. 151; Cf. Kāśīkṛpāśāstrā, "Śrīkṛpā" in *Le Monde Oriental*, vol. XXX (1930—Upaniṣads), pp. 60-169 quoted in Chatterji's work; Cf. R. K. Choudhury—*Pratyaṅga* in *Antiquities India* (1964).

2 *Pañc. Śāstrā*—IX, 14; *Yaj. Śāstrā*—III, 4, 12, 1; *Sāhitya*—16-12.

3 *AP*—X, 4, 14.

4 *Manu*—X, 24.

of a composite culture in the Vindhya region in the earliest period. The precise features of the pre-Vedic cults are difficult to determine. Some distinctive groups of the non-aryans were added to the Vedic pantheon. The Kiratas lived on the Himalayan slopes and in the mountains of the east. Since we find their mention in the Vedic literature, we may conclude that by that time they had mingled with the Aryans and had influenced their culture to a great extent. So far as Vindhya is concerned, they were undoubtedly the most prominent actors on the scene and forerunners of trade and culture between China and north-eastern India through Nepal. They were also the carriers of culture on both sides of the Himalaya.

According to the Puranic tradition, the city of Mithilā was founded and named after the region had been colonised by the followers of Videgha Mithava. According to Monier-Williams, Videha indicated the whole country, and Mithilā applied to the capital city but ultimately Mithilā replaced Videha as the name of that territory. The old names like Videha, Mithilā and Tirabhukhī have persisted to this day. We have a list of twelve names in the Mahabharata of the *Prachyotsarga-parvāṇa*.⁷ Mithilā appears to have been excluded from the four ancient sacred divisions of the country viz., Brahmanavarta, Dakṣiṇapāṭikā, Mānavaṇḍikā, and Aryavarta. Mithilā acquired sanctity from the fact that there roamed about a black antelope in this region.⁸ Mithilā was considered an important part of the Prachyadeśa, Prachin in the ancient Tibetan geography included Mithilā and Aṅga,⁹ Jyotiṣhava of the

⁵ विष्णुः सैद्धान्तिकः, देशः, सैमिष्टनम् ।

ଜିନାୟତ୍ ହଜାତ୍, ଫାତ୍ତାୟତ୍ ହଜାତ୍, ଧର୍ମାୟତ୍ ହଜାତ୍ ।

संस्थागत विकास, निर्देशिका विभाग

दावात्मकता, विवादात्मकता, विवाद-रहितता ।

[illegible]

6. R. V. Kane—*History of Dharmadharma*—II (1), p. 14 B. We learn from a verse in the *Siddhānta* that the path of duty was revealed by the sage of Michil (Yājñavalkya) is that enquiry in which the black antelope roams about.

1. IC—vol. VII, 2. Oriens (edited) CSI-V(II), p. 4; *Gleanings of the Peeples* of Vidyakant—सर्वो लोकमुदीतः। आचार्य इत्यादिना संस्कृतम्.

Mañdhātara is identified with *Mithilā*. The province of *Tirahat* includes *Videha*, *Mithilā* and *Vaishā*.

On account of the geographical factors and the existence of a large number of rivers and rivulets, all weather communications are open only a few months even today in a major part of *Mithilā*. Besides these geographical factors, extraordinary devotion to traditional learning has been responsible for the orthodoxy and conservatism of the *Mañdhātara* in day to day life. This has made them static for a long time. They guarded their teaching with extreme jealousy and this was responsible for the growth of institutions like *Śaṅkara* and *Śaṅkara*.

II

Mithilā made a notable contribution to the development of *Upaniṣadic* ideas and philosophy.¹ The *Mañdhātara* made a radical departure from the accepted notions of the *Veda* rituals and paved the way for the *Jains* and the *Buddhists* in emphasising on asceticism. *Videha*, the cradle of *Upaniṣadic* culture, played an important part in the development of this aspect of civilisation. The traditional notion about the infallibility of the *Vedas* disappeared in favour with the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads*. We have in the *Māṇḍūkya* (1.2.7) the following assertion—"But frail, in truth, are these beings, the mortals... Those who probe this as the highest good are subject again and again to old age and death."

Yajñavalkya told *Gārgi*—"Whatever, O *Gārgi*, without knowing the imperishable (*akṣara*) offers oblations in the world, sacrifices and prayers for a thousand years, his work will have an end. Whosoever, O *Gārgi*, without knowing this imperishable departs this world, he is miserable (like a slave). He too, O *Gārgi*, who departs this world, knowing this imperishable, he is ' *Brahman* '—(*Bṛh Upaniṣad*, III, 8.10)."

1 *MNC*, II, *Part II*—XII, pp. 310-325.

2 *Māṇḍūkya*—1.2.7—"The lower knowledge is the *Śrauta*, *Yajñavalkya*, *Saṁkhya* and *Aśvamedha*... but the higher knowledge is that by which the imperishable is apprehended (*Brahman*)."

By doing away with the orthodox Vedic traditions of *Tajsa* and *Tapa*, Vidyā took the lead in emphasising the other means of salvation, that is, the knowledge of the absolute. The *Rāgwanīswaya* has rightly pointed out that "the Maithilis are adept in the true knowledge of the self... in their own houses." The *Upaniṣads* constitute the highest level of intellectual attainments and mark the cultural attainments of a very high order in Mithila.

There are conflicting evidences about Janaka-Yājñavalkya relationship. Janaka, Gārgi and Ārtabhāga are described as pupils of Yājñavalkya. It has to be borne in mind that formal pupilship was not necessary in the early period. Maitreyi (Yājñavalkya's wife), Ārtabhāga and Gārgi were not exactly pupils of Yājñavalkya in the strictest sense of the term. In those days of intellectual curiosity, distinguished scholars were encouraged to become regular teachers. We know that Janaka Vidyā met some wandering Brahmanas like Śvetaketu, Āruṇya, Samakṣma, Satyayajña, Yājñavalkya etc., whom he asked about the offering of the *Agnihotra* relation. Though Yājñavalkya, in his own way, gave satisfactory answer yet it contained some flaws which were pointed out by Janaka who himself explained to him the offering of *Agnihotra*. He, thus, put questions to Yājñavalkya and thence forward he became a Brahmana or *Brahmanīṣha*, having the knowledge of *Brahma*. Janaka taught Yājñavalkya, Itatishāna and others¹⁰ and thereby established the supremacy of the Kṣatriyas in the realm of knowledge and philosophy.

Through a long line of Janakas, Mithila became an important seat of culture in the whole of Prāchyaśāstra. For the attainment of the true knowledge of *Brahman*, the Janakas had consulted teachers like Īrka, Jivan, Śakalya, Uśāska, Gaṇḍhāvīpita, and various others. From the point of view of eminence, they were matchless in their own field. From different sources we learn that Ārtabhāga, Bhūṣya, Lābhyayana, Māga, Chakrayana, Kahoja, Kṛuṣṭakeya, Uddālaka, Āruṇi, Aśvaka, Jāratākṛaya, and many

¹⁰ *Chand. Upan.*—IV. 2.3; *Vid. Sūtra. Brh.*—XII. 12.6; *Also cf.*—*Sat. Brh.*—XI. 6. 7. 1

other thinkers of the age graced the court of Janaka¹¹ whose generosity was a constant source of disappointment to Ajatasatru of Kāśī. Janaka justified title of Viśvāma by offering his entire kingdom to Yājñavalkya. It was Janaka who laid stress on knowledge and opposed sacrifices and rituals. The rejection of religious sacrifices evoked a great protest even among the followers of Brahminism and thus led to a revolt against "formalism and exclusiveness against the Brahmanical system."¹² Janaka Viśvāma even refused to admit to the hierarchical pretensions of the Brahmanas and asserted his right of performing sacrifices without the intervention of priests. This assertion of Janaka braked a glorious chapter in the annals of Mithilā and in this respect his contribution to the development of a distinct Maithilī culture, as distinct and different from the Kuru-Panchal culture of the west, is really outstanding. Janaka's moral nature is fully borne out by his famous saying—"In this blazing city of Mithilā, nothing of mine is burning." According to A. L. Basham, at the root of the growth of asceticism "lay not only a dissatisfaction with the sacrificial cult but a clear psychological uneasiness which was caused by the feeling of insecurity due to the break up of the tribal units which had so far given the people a sense of solidarity."¹³

Yājñavalkya means one who promulgates sacrifices.¹⁴ He had two wives viz. Maitreyī and Kātīyāni and a son named Naciketa by the latter. He held liberal views and advocated the eating of tender cows and goat.¹⁵ He is called *ṛṣiḥ* and it has been held that the "doctrines promulgated by Yājñavalkya in the *Bṛh. Upaniṣad* are in fact completely Brahminic."¹⁶ By the time of the Upaniṣads, we come across a good number of wandering teachers viz., Gaṇḍarva, Kapila, Mithiśāstra, Śaṅkara, Kāśyapa, Vedavyāsa, etc. who had begun to expound new ideas on everything including Vedic ritual and sacrifices. The rigidity and complexities of the earlier period had by

11 *Śat. Brh.*—IV, 1, 1-4; *Bṛh. Upan.*—III, 2.

12 *CHI*, vol. 1, p. 63; It should be noted here that the Upaniṣads laid stress on knowledge as the means of salvation.

13 *Paganis*—IV, 2, 101 (comment 1; *CC. Śat. Brh.* XIV, 6.1.1). *Śat. Brh.* III, 11.1.14.

14 *Śat. Brh.*—III, 1.2.25.

15 *Upaniṣad Thakur—History of Mithilā*, p. 103.

then slackened and the Jātakas show that the priestly class had lost its authority.¹⁶ In his teachings to Mañireya, Yājñavalkya has enunciated the principles of *Mīmāṃsā*.

The precise nature of the non-Vedic worship is not exactly known. Mahādeva (Śiva) was certainly a non-Vedic deity and the presence of the line of Śiva in the palace of Mithilā from the time of king Devavarman to that of Janaka is not quite accidental. It suggests that once upon a time Janaka's ancestors (the original occupants of the land) were Śiva worshippers or had accepted Śiva worship which was then current in the area as the prominent pre-Vedic religious cult. It was in fact an ancient local cult which the Rāmāyana mentions as *Dharmamahāyajña*. It has been held that Rāma's breaking of Śiva's bow and his victory over Parashurāma amounted to ending non-Vedic Śaivism¹⁷ which had been popular in Mithilā for a long time. This view however seems erroneous as the following discussion would show.

When the Janaka dynasty began to rule, the Kīrātās were holding sway over a major part of Videha. The Janakas respected the old cultural beliefs and practices of his conquered subjects including the Kīrātās who were Śaivas. As we have seen above, the Janakas were not orthodox followers of the Vedic customs rather they had brought about radical changes therein. The political expediency might have demanded a change not only in religious and philosophical outlook but also in cultural field and by adopting the existing customs of the vanquished Kīrātās, the Janakas might have paved the way for cultural assimilation. In view of these facts, we may categorically state that Śiva had come to be recognised as the most powerful deity by the time Rāma had emerged on the scene and the fusion between the aryan and non-aryan religious concepts had commenced. It must be asserted that the breaking of Śiva's bow did not mark the ending of the non-Vedic Śaivism rather it marked the beginning of a further step in the process of cultural assimilation which began with the dawn of civilisation. Rāma, himself, worshipped Śiva before embarking on his expedition against Ravana.

¹⁶ CHI.—vol. I, p. 221.

¹⁷ JABS, vol. XLVIII, pp. 100.

King Janaka brought radical changes in the realm of philosophical thought of the age. He made a sharp break with the past on ideological plane, and was a symbol of *Jnanamukti*, completely unattached like the lotus leaf, and was regarded as an emblem of perfect wisdom. He represented a synthesis of *Jāna*, *Karma*, *Sannyasa* and *Gārhasthya* as is evident from the *Dandakgrāma* and *Śrīmadvishnugraha*. Yajñavalkya, in course of his instruction to his wife, declared : "It is the self for whose sake everything else in the world is dear to all—that self ought to be seen, heard of, contemplated and realised." The emphasis on the introspective self-analysis formed the basis of philosophy in Mithilā and the detachment from worldly objects became a prominent feature of Mithilā character as is exemplified by the life of one of the most illustrious sons of Mithilā—Mr. Bhavanātha Mishra, 'Ayāchā'. The concept of *Jnanamukti* has since been inspiring the life of the eminent Mithilāis. In Mithilā homes for generations, two seemingly contradictory environments seem to have prevailed simultaneously—the scholar husband dedicated to the pursuit of metaphysical knowledge and the gay and lively residents singing uninhibited songs, painting on the walls of *Kashkara* and decking themselves out in attractive make-up and clothes. The story of Vācaspati and Bhāmanī quite current even today in Mithilā as the ideal husband and wife. The comparison of lotus leaf with the concept of *Jnanamukti* is a point to reckon with in so far as Mithilā is concerned. Lotus came to be an integral part of Mithilā culture as is evident from the writings of Vidyapati.¹⁸ He expressed both the lust for life and the spirit of denial and devotion. He also treated lotus as of special significance in the study of Mithilā Culture.¹⁹

18 R. K. Chandra, 'Mithilā in the Age of Vidyapati' (Varanasi, 1976).

भादोलिपि (रामायण बीली कवच-1947) for an elucidation of the concept of Lotus.

19 (i) प्रथम मेरी रीत करुण, मेरी रीत करुण रीत ।

(ii) लख लख लख लख लख लख लख लख ।

(iii) लख लख लख लख लख लख लख लख ।

(iv) लख लख लख लख लख लख लख लख ।

(v) लख लख लख लख लख लख लख लख ।

(vi) लख लख लख लख लख लख लख लख ।

(vii) लख लख लख लख लख लख लख लख ।

(viii) लख लख लख लख लख लख लख लख ।

III

Keeping with the tradition of Janaka and Yājñavalkya, Mithilā's contribution to the realm of philosophy, *Nyāya* and *Mīmāṃsā* is unique. The rise of *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*, as forming part of one discipline, presupposes a long previous development of philosophical thought. *Vaiśeṣika* and *Nyāya* form a closely connected pair. The *Vaiśeṣika* system aimed at attaining a comprehensive philosophical view whereas *Nyāya* constituted a detailed and acute exposition of formal logic. The *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* system is satisfied with pointing out the means of salvation and consisting in correct knowledge. This system admits of nothing invisible or transcendent (*avyākṛta*). The system did not originally accept the existence of god and expounded the theory that salvation depended on a correct knowledge of things. Later on, with the rise of *Nāgārjuna* (analogue of *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika*), the system became theistic in nature as is evident from Udayana's *Kaumudī*. This became necessary because Mithilā protected orthodox culture from the onslaughts of all heterodox schools of thought. Vātsyāyana wrote his *Sāhya* on *Nyāyasūtra*. Udayakara wrote his *Parīkṣa* on *Bhāṣya* and Vācaspati not only elaborated the concept of *Pramāṇa*, but also defended it against the Buddhist attack. He was the master of all the six systems of Indian philosophy and laid the foundation of the Mithilā school of philosophy which inspired later writers to refuting the Buddhist logic. Śaṅkara had given a crushing defeat to the heterodox schools of thought both on ideological and metaphysical plane and succeeded in reviving Hinduism on a sound basis.

In Mithilā, trinitarianism now formed the basis of Hinduism. It consisted of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahesh and in the course of time Brahmā came to be relegated to the background. Gradually, the harmonising effect of this trinitarianism was seen in the growth of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaktism. Though Śaṅkara fought the battle on ideological plane, it was left to Vācaspati to put it on a more secure philosophical basis against the attacks of Buddhism. Udayana defended the case against the Buddhists and succeeded in refuting not only their no-soul theory but also in ably expounding the principles of Theism. Long before the problems of Induction in Logic attracted the attention of western logicians, Gaṅgeśa (founder of *Nyāya-Nyāya*) studied

his emphasis from Ontology to Epistemology and the system continued to be cultivated by scholars like Vaidyanātha, Pakyadhara, Vātsēśvara, Śaṅkara Miśra,²⁰ Vācaspati (II) and others. Even Lakṣmīnā is said to have written a treatise on *Nyaya-Padārtha* entitled *Padārtha-Chandra*.

In the field of *Mīmāṃsā*, Miśra's contribution is unique. The credit for its rejuvenation goes to Kumārila Bhaṭṭa who re-established the supremacy of *Karmakāṇḍa* by vigorously defending it against the Buddhists. Maṇḍana Miśra of Mithilā (Saharsa) was not only the *śāgini-pati* of Kumārila but also his disciple. Maṇḍana was a great supporter of Vedic *Karmakāṇḍa*. He with Bhāratī, presided over the intellectual debate between him and Śaṅkara and thereby made his mark as a scholar of eminence by ruling in favour of the monistic Vedānta of Śaṅkara. Prabhākara, a classmate of Maṇḍana, made a marked departure from the position held by Kumārila and a third school of *Mīmāṃsā* was started by Maṇḍarī.

Kumārila was the founder of the *Śāgini-mānā*. He propounded that *mīmāṃsā* was based upon the Vedas, upon ordinary experience and also upon direct perception and inference based upon these. It has been reared up by an unbroken line of scientific teachers.²¹ Various commentaries on the works of Kumārila (viz. *Tantracāṇḍīka*, *Tuṣṭīka* and *Śāntarāṇḍīka*) have been written by a number of scholars. Maṇḍana carried the point further in his *Neigāṇḍīka*. He was the propagator of Kumārila's views and in doing so he wrote a commentary on *Tantracāṇḍīka*. In his *Viśvī-Parvā*, Maṇḍana refutes the *Śāgini* and the *Caranā* and in his *Spāṇḍīka*, he has criticised the views of his Caran. As a great Vedāntist, he wrote *Brahmasūtrīka*, a masterpiece in the history of Vedānta philosophy. Prabhākara was the founder of *Caranā* and the *Śāgini* forms the basis of his school. Maṇḍarī Miśra was the founder of *Āgini-mānā*. He held independent views on the theory of the validity of knowledge. The *Mīmāṃsā* support *Śāntapramāṇa* (self-validity) and the *Neigāṇḍīka* support *Paratapramāṇa*. Prabhākara supports the former. Kumārila somewhat differs from him and Maṇḍarī suggests new theory nearer to the *Nyaya* system.

20 R. K. Chaudhary—*Mīmāṃsā in the Age of Pāṇini*—for details.

21 Gopalakṛishṇa Jha—*Pravāṇḍīka in its Sources*—CL. R. N. Dasgupta—*History of Indian Philosophy*—II, 97-98.

In the long list of thinkers, Vietnamese stands out prominently. His earliest work *Thi-Nam* (possibly named after his wife) refers to the ancient doctrine of *Phu-nhau-phu-da* and gives a fitting reply to it. It is here rightly observed that "every system of Indian philosophy owes a deep debt to *Thi-Nam*."

IV

From the religious point of view, *Thi-Nam* was born the centre of *Jainism*, *Jainism* and *Buddhism* and various other cults since time immemorial. It has to be stressed in the beginning the high philosophical distinction and the substantial of religion during with the customs of the rulers, power and authority and the common mind of the people. He seems not the required religious foundations to indulge in such luxuries. Abstract themselves had to remain for them since they were involved in their way today through a existence. The *Thi-Nam* as revealed in the *Thi-Nam* might have stated a seeds for the hermits of the future—say of the sixth century B.C. Values of present are seen in the *Thi-Nam* and *Thi-Nam* played no mean part in it. The ruling nobility refused to submit to the *Thi-Nam* and insisted on the primacy of knowledge in *Thi-Nam* and *Thi-Nam*. The rise of *Jainism* and *Buddhism* gave a further push. The wide impact of these two religious systems was a lasting contribution and a profound heritage of *Thi-Nam*. The two systems are in a manner *Thi-Nam* and *Thi-Nam* may be compared as *Thi-Nam* and *Thi-Nam* *Thi-Nam*—a name already set earlier by king *Thi-Nam*. These two hermits systems rejected *Thi-Nam*'s faith in immortality and the caste system as well. *Thi-Nam* tried to see a synthesis of *Jainism* while being looked upon by the *Buddhists* as a minority of hermits and ascetics.

All the divergent religious systems and sects flourished side by side in *Thi-Nam*. *Buddhism* created a new sense of reality and left its indelible mark on the cultural heritage of north *Thi-Nam*. The idea of *Thi-Nam* as the *Thi-Nam* *Thi-Nam* through centuries and found birth in a new form in *Buddhism*.

22. *Thi-Nam* *Thi-Nam*. *Thi-Nam* in *Thi-Nam* and *Buddhism* in *Thi-Nam*, p. 49. Cf. S. M. Dasgupta—op. cit., 1-4-5; R. K. Choudhury—*The University of Philosophy*.

from one hundred and sixty volumes. Vaidya is also credited with having completed a unique work "Agamoddharanama". Famous tantric works like *Saṅgata* a commentary on *Tantrasādhya*, *Śānta-saṅgata* by Candrapada and *Śānta-bhakti-saṅgata* etc. were written and completed. These works belong to the *Vaidyanaga*. It has been held that the *Tantra* are meant for the Kali age and for the low class people.

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From the time of Emperor Ashoka, 4th century A.D. down to Harsha's reign, Varanasi found favour in Ikshvaku. The famous Jain, Visnupada, was one of

17 B. B. Vernon, *Algal and Fungal Flora of the Oregon Coast*, pp. 14-15
CY Pacifica-Pond, prepared by Dorothy Cunningham. Not available by Microdoc-
uments Dept.

the greatest Vaishnava thinkers of India. But our writers have on one or other part obedience to Vyasa and they have shown affection to Vaishnava deity. Feelings towards Vaishnavism in Kerala were quite sympathetic. It is one thing to be a Panchacharyas and another to have a sympathetic attitude towards Vaishnavism. Subbendra Jiu has rightly controverted the idea of Panchacharyas in Kerala.²¹ Hari, Vyasa, Sri and Narayana incarnations of Vyasa are mentioned by Chakrasvara. That the Manthilas followed by Vaishnava saints right from the beginning of the Charyas of Math is clear from the *Aradhacharya* and from a list of names in a poem which we read that it erected a temple in honour of Vyasa.²² Dates for Vyasa worship are found as prescribed in the writings of the Matha. Acharyas like Chakrasvara, Chaitanyas and Chaitanyacharyas, Bhasanarayana, Vignapuri, Bhagavatadasa and Devananda and others have shown all due respect to Vaishnavism. Vignapuri was an Acharya of Matha. Vaishnavism is a Hindu devotion. According to Subbendra Jiu, "none of the poems in the *Vedant Matha* in which Acharya refers to himself as the Hindu being, the name of any other person of the poet is not" etc. Famous Manthila poet, Govindadasa, was paid glowing praises in Vignapuri for his devotion to Vaishnavism.

V

Since the last of Vaishnavism Math has been the centre of Sri and Krishna. These deities give us a picture of contemporary society and various social problems. The Manthila Saint writers aimed at harmonization of and reconciliation between various sects. They welcomed the process of *Sampradaya* and some sects like Vaishnavism were brought into the fold of Math. In this respect Acharya, Chakrasvara and Vignapuri left behind their earlier parts in the past and Chaitanyas, Vignapuri, Vignapuri and Narayana represented the new trend of thought in organising social reform. The Bengal reformer

21 S. I. — The work of Acharya Chakrasvara, p. 43. Cf. Acharya in the age of the past looking on Vaishnavism's Faith, *Journal*, vol. III, pp. 4-10. K. K. Chaitanyas, vol. 1-2.

22 K. K. Chaitanyas—*Vedant Matha*, p. 124.

23 *The Matha*, Calcutta p. 3, para 1 A 2.

Englishlandina suggested Profranchise but the Mizos did not write to him and took a negative attitude as we find in Vamapu's *Khawhthawm* where he advises not to learn *Abokhah's* language, that is, Persian as if this would solve all the problems.

The early writers of Mizohil novels could not be called idealists, some of them were themselves great British lords, who having been reared from political power and being British-born themselves, engaged in writing their works. Even though great socio-economic and political changes around Mizos were taking place, early writers of novels did not change their views about colonial *Khawhthawm*. They wrote everything for the British and treated Mizos as non-citizens though they considered the superiority. The *Khawhthawm* who held the office of a *Pradipada*. These *Khawhthawms* were corrupted mainly for the economic side. They were driven far from the realities and activities of life. They are found writing eloquent over the names of early *Daw* and it is only Vamapu who has represented the real reality of *Mizos*. Among the conscious novel writers, Vamapu holds a special position because he focuses the society against corrupt public persons, misgoverning as he has, like teachers, doctors, politicians, arbitrators, witnesses, *Mizos*, *Turkies* etc and call them *Pradipada*.

VI

In its description of Mizos, the *Mizos* *Journal* no 519 speaks of all the urban organizations. In the study of literature Mizos made a considerable contribution in respect of music and paintings. Even today Mizos has special songs for each and every occasion. Mizohil has special regards for her typical traditional arts and crafts. The Mizohil School of Music has been able to maintain its proud history because of the unique contribution made by her women folk.

27 Cf. *Mizos* *Journal*. *Mizohil* *Journal*—My article on Mizohil in that volume. Here it should be noted that the study of the *Mizos* and *Mizohil* was encouraged by the State as it served their class interests.

Mithila has a special history of its own. *Varaha, Joga, Lakshmi, Soma, Jambha, Mahadeva, Kaleshvara, Parashurama, Mahesha* etc. are some of the types. Mithilite songs having internal appeal.

The *Parashurama* of Jyotirmayan mentions seven kinds of deities of singers and fourteen kinds of *Ganapati*. *Shashibha* was a great lover and patron of music and he encouraged *Jambha* to compose the songs of *Varaha, Vidyapati* & by his added beauty and strength a new school of masters of music, devotees of *Mithila* in its infancy. Various authors like *Singhacharya* & author of the famous work, *Singhacharya* & *Jagaddhara* (author of *Singhacharya*, *Ganapati* author of *Parashurama* & *Mithila* These and others have written standards of music on music. Mithila had its own style and origin as is known to us from *Lachhara's Rigveda*.¹²

In the last few centuries, Mithila has made a unique contribution and the modern world has developed a taste for Mithilite paintings. When and how this special type of painting came into existence, we can not definitely say but this much is certain that this art is of a very antique origin and it has its origin in the Puranic culture. Its connection with *Tani* is a form of worship & indicative of its antiquity. Mithilite paintings, old & new, have been kept alive through the medium of this traditional folk art. Every specific painting has a tale to tell. It is important to note that Mithilite art is not only rooted in a Christian art community but also in Mithilite and tribal art centers to study the spiritual and historical of the Mithilite paintings.

Through *Mithila* is considered to be common art in the whole of eastern India, the people of Mithila have remained devoted worshippers of *Shiva* and *Shakti* (as is well known). So as a form of art devotion to *Mithila* are provided by a type of painting known as *Shakti*, known as *Shakti*. No social function in Mithila, even the wedding one, can be thought

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of without the auspicious painting. The type of auspicious differs from function to function. *Auspicious* is sketched on earthen, wooden plank, piece of wood etc. paper and is done for all occasions (from birth to death). Seven round paintings for marriage, christening, death, marriage, marriage, marriage etc. are depicted in a traditional painting for the wedding of girls. The particular type of painting for marriage and others are as follows :—

- (i) *Sankranti*
- (ii) *Auspicious*
- (iii) *Auspicious* of the painting of the 12 signs of zodiac
- (iv) *Birth*—on the occasion of *Uttarashadha*
- (v) *Marriage*—on the occasion of *Shravana*
- (vi) *Death*—on the occasion of the occasion of *Shravana*
- (vii) *Marriage*—on the occasion of *Shravana*
- (viii) *Marriage*—on the occasion of *Shravana*
- (ix) *Marriage*—on the occasion of *Shravana*
- (x) *Marriage*—on the occasion of *Shravana*
- (xi) *Marriage*—on the occasion of the *Shravana* day
- (xii) *Marriage*—on the occasion of the *Shravana* day (also known as *Shravana* day)
- (xiii) *Marriage*—on the occasion of *Shravana* to *Shravana*
- (xiv) *Marriage*—on the occasion of *Shravana*, depicting a pair of bullock, a plough and cart
- (xv) *Marriage*—for religious occasions
- (xvi) *Marriage*—for unmarried girls
- (xvii) *Marriage* or *Shravana*
- (xviii) *Marriage*
- (xix) *Marriage*
- (xx) *Marriage*
- (xxi) *Marriage* for *Shravana*—the *Shravana* day as the base.

These paintings are connected with the daily life of the people of Assam and are the products of the various *Sankranti*. The *Vedic Sankranti* or *Sankranti* continues to painting done on this day and is known as *Sankranti* by the

women around the Tuber plant in the month of Kārtika—directions for writing drawings or paintings are found in the *Kṛtyaratnāvalī*. The art of painting in Mithila has been preserved since time immemorial by the women of the Kācāpā Kāyasthas and Brāhmanas. Line drawings on the ground is known as *śiṣpā*. Most of them are symbolical of various deities and the majority of the pictures are shapes representing natural objects like flowers, leaves, tree, fish, peacocks, snakes, sun and the moon, gods and goddesses, ploughmen, swarajās, bhairav carriers, etc. The art, thus, expresses religious imagination and group emotion.

The *Gaṇaśaṅkha*, *Bohara*, *Har-mun-pūṣā-kā-chita*, *Sarasa-chitra* etc. are also important representatives of the Mithilā school of painting. The aim of the wall painting is to mirror the colour and variety of life and nature of man and just glimpses of life, environment and nature. Inside the *Bohara*, the four corners are painted with figures of four women known as *śaṅkha-pūṣā* carrying various articles on their heads. On one wall would be *śaṅkha-pūṣā* with a painted complexion with birds. Another would be a lotus plant with flowers capped by a human face depicting the moon. In the verandah outside *Bohara* scenes from rural life of Mithilā are profusely illustrated.

VII

Mithilā made a notable contribution towards the development of Indian culture in the field of language and literature and its script is important to the extent that it is one of the earliest known scripts of northern India.²⁹ Its antiquity is vouchsafed by the *Lalitamāra* which mentions the Pāṇini script *Aśvikaṭṭhā* or *Tikṭhā*, as it is popularly known, emerged out of an earlier variety of the Gupta script as is shown in Bühler's chart. The inscriptions of Aśvameśa exhibit the first remarkable change in the development of north-eastern script. The various late Gupta, Pāṇi, Kāśyāp and Oṅvara inscriptions discovered from Mithilā show the typical traits of Mithilā script. The

29 Chaudhary—Mithilā in the age of Haryapada Cf. Rajawar 122—Mithilā script is Dignā O Pihān.

script has travelled beyond the Ganges as is evident from the two epigraphic records discovered from Surasagar and Sambal Paragona. Maithili script, equally popular in Tibet and there are thousands of Tibetan manuscripts in Maithili character and some of them are preserved in the library of the Paris Research Society, Paris. The script origin is suggested by the representing letter 'K' which displays creative energy. Every letter is suggestive of some sense. The earliest source of the script is the Kharosthi script which, in course of time, came to be known as Maithili script, mentioned by Dharmapala.

The literary sources of Maithili are very old. Nanyadava was one of the greatest patrons of art and culture and upon them the tradition has continued without any break. Nanyadava, Jayadava, Jayachandava, a Rajaraj, many others, Govindacharya, Anantacharya, Lachharia and various others are names to come to mind. Several prominent & specific contributions of Maithili in the field of literature, as evident in the history of Jaisara and Krishna Mahabharata. Acharya has discussed the song metres of Maithili and has given a list of twenty six songs. In another place, Chandra Jha reviewed most of these metres. In another place, the common type of Maithili poetry are —

1) Tribhuj

ii Bhagawan Nityak " Anubhava

iii Ganga, source of Karma in the company of Ganga

iv) Ram Krishna's sportive talk with Sita

Adana

Other important forms of Maithili folk poetry have been mentioned earlier. The Maithili folk literature is equally important from literary point of view. It is marked by simplicity and freshness. Maithili folk literature has long romantic tales like *Arjun Bhairav*, *Sakha*, *Chandabhai*, *Neela Bhairav*, *Sankardev* etc. The evolution of lyric poetry set in early epigraphic, elevated and perfected by Jayadava, Lachharia, Vidyacharya and Govindacharya, is a precious heritage of Indian literature. Maithili lyrics are distinguished by their blending

The Karpāpa regime provided a stable social order in the form of an ingenious hierarchical system and maintenance of family genealogies. Mithila under the Karpāpas witnessed enriched intellectualism with a lyrical and colourful stream of music and fine arts. The music developed on lines different from the present day Hindustani music of northern India. The impact of south Indian music on Mithila is obvious. In the *Corakavyaya* of Vidyapati, there is a reference to a dancer from Tailangadeka.

A wave of popular Hinduism in the form of Bhāgavata creed and Śaivism is reflected in contemporary drama, song and dance and also in the festivals, domestic rituals and folklore of the common people. Peoples' language emerged as the national language of Mithila as early as the 12th-13th century AD. when other language groups of north India were still groaning under the dead weight of Sanskrit. Not only that, almost parallel to the sophisticated art, pottery, textile painting and paintings on walls and grounds grew up under the influence of popular Hinduism. This was a notable development during the Oināra period when we find the dissemination of courtly art into the villages with the result that even after the court ceased to be powerful the cultural trends remained alive. Since the days of *Yajurveda* right upto the present the Maithilis have succeeded in maintaining their cultural identity without any break and that has been possible due partly to its geographical setting and partly to the innate conservatism of its people who are the real custodians of the cultural traits.

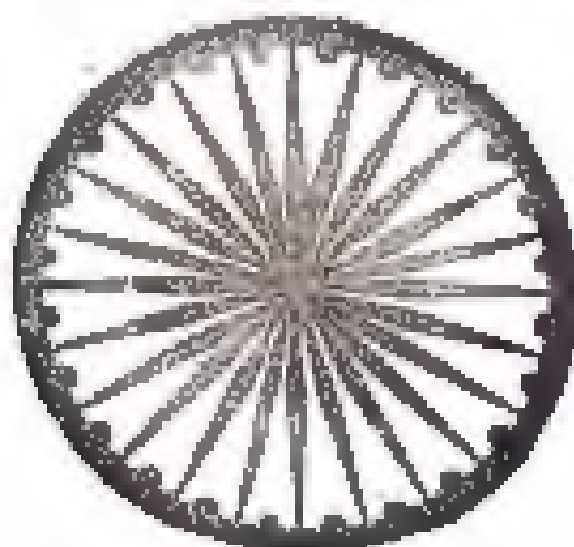
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